



Written By
 Missionary Women
 of
 The Creative Drama Group

Landour, India

Price Ten Cents

General Mission Board
 Church of the Brethren
 Elgin, Illinois

THE HOPE OF INDIA

PLACE: The living-room of the home of a missionary professor in a large Christian college in one of the great cities of India.

PERSONS: Mr. Brown, the missionary.

Mrs. Brown, his wife.

Bobby and Billy Brown, their two little boys of four and six years.

Dr. Stirling, member of a Commission from America.

Mrs. Stirling.

Miss Gupta, an Indian Christian lady.

Mrs. Price, another missionary.

Lady Muhammad Ali and her daughters, Mrs. Nur Ahmad, and Mrs. Taj Din,
(Mohammedan ladies).

Mrs. Allah Din, an old fashioned Mohammedan lady, still wears the burqu
which indicates that she has not yet broken away from "purdah."

Lady Hakim Shah, highly educated Mohammedan lady.

Mrs. Mohan Lal, Hindu lady.

EXPLANATION OF PURDAH: Mohammedan women and high caste Hindu women of India have for centuries held to the custom of "purdah." This means that they live in seclusion, away from the sight of men, and even when they venture outside their homes, they are heavily veiled with the "purdah" (curtain) over their faces.

PROPERTIES: Table, chairs, reading lamp, books, newspaper, etc. Wraps. Tea Set.

Red color to paint a small round red spot in the center of the Hindu lady's forehead. Two saris of silk, for the Christian Miss Gupta, and the Hindu lady. The sari is a strip of various colored cloth, about five yards long and forty-eight inches wide. This is draped about the body to form a dress. Look at pictures of our India Christian women to see how the draping is done.

Five Mohammedan outfits. Each outfit consists of three pieces: trousers, fitting rather tightly to the legs and reaching down to the floor; long dainty shirt reaching to the knees, lace around the bottom of the shirt; and a pretty, thin, bright veil placed lightly around the head and neck. Use various colors. (If Mohammedan outfits cannot be obtained or made, the Mohammedan women may wear saris. But a real attempt should be made to dress correctly according to nationality.)

One Burqu. This is a full gathered robe hanging from the head to the ankles, covering the entire body. The upper part of the robe is like a skull-cap, and gathered around into its lower edge are some four strips of cloth.(each about 27 inches wide) These four strips of cloth reach to the floor. The four strips are sewed together, except for the front seam. This seam is open up until within a foot of the skull-cap, thus permitting the robe to be thrown back to expose the face (when permissible.) Directly in front of the robe and below the skull-cap are two peep-holes made of lace, through which the lady can look, when the robe is hanging down.

Jewelry. The Mohammedan ladies are heavily jeweled. The Hindu woman wears very little jewelry. The Christian women wears none.

The American women wear ordinary afternoon dresses, at the TEA, light in color, as preferred for a hot climate.

PRONUNCIATION:

i - like o in grief.

a - like a in father.

u - like u in Ruth.

o - like o in ocean.

SCENES: Scene I - Missionary's home - Time, 9 P. M.
Scene II - " " - Next Morning.
Scene III - " " - Same Afternoon.

SCENE I

Mr. Brown sits reading the newspaper beside a table, on which there is a reading-lamp books, etc. Enter Mrs. Brown, taking off a small hat as she comes in, and sinking wearily into a chair beside her husband.

MR. BROWN: Well, here you are! What happened to you this evening?

MRS. BROWN: It is a long story -- but first tell me if Mrs. Khair Din and her little girl got off all right. I was sorry to leave in such a hurry without saying good-bye, but I was glad I had given the little boys their supper and got them off to bed before I was called away.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes. They had dinner with me, and then, as you had taken our car, Mr. Harrison very kindly came and took them down to the station in time for the train. She wanted me to tell you how very grateful she was to you for arranging to have little Zorah examined by Dr. Hari Kishen. They have been so worried about her and it was such a comfort to have her so carefully examined by a specialist and to have his advice. She feels much encouraged, and was so thankful that she did not have to pay him a large fee, as she had expected.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, Dr. Hari Kishen says he is only too glad to help Christian people in any way he can. He feels he owes everything to Dr. Powell, who gave him his start in his hospital, on the frontier, and encouraged him to go ahead and take his medical training. It was the inspiration of Dr. Powell's self-sacrificing life, and the fact that he gave his life in this service, that led Dr. Hari Kishen to take up the work he is doing. Although he does not call himself a Christian, he is an earnest student of the New Testament, and certainly shows a Christian spirit in his life.

MR. BROWN: Well, tell me what took you off so suddenly.

MRS. BROWN: Just after I had put the boys to bed, at about seven, the ayah came in to say that Jhunnia, the wife of M'agi', one of the College sweepers was very ill indeed. She said Jhunnia's baby had been born unexpectedly early, and the baby had died, and now she feared the woman herself would die.

MR. BROWN: Why did they not call you sooner?

MRS. BROWN: I was out this afternoon and so they could not call me then, and M'agi' had refused to call a doctor or municipal nurse for his wife, although they begged him to do so, and now she didn't know what would happen to poor Jhunnia. I told the ayah to go right out to M'agi's house and tell them I would come at once and take Jhunnia to the Zenana Hospital. I called up the hospital and told them to expect us, and then I drove the car round just as near to M'agi's house as I could get. The poor woman was sitting on a bed in the verandah of their house, and when she saw me, without a word, and pulled aside a heap of filthy rags, and showed me her poor little dead baby.

MR. BROWN: How terribly sad!

MRS. BROWN: It was too sad for words. I returned to M'agi' and said, "Pick her up and carry her out to the car." He began to object, but I said, "Very well, if you don't carry her I will, for she is too weak to walk." So then he picked her up, and carried her to the car, and I drove them over to the hospital. I only stayed long enough to make sure she was all right. The doctor said she was in such a state that they couldn't tell for sure whether they could pull her through, but that bringing her to the hospital was her only chance.

MR. BROWN: Well, I dare say you are ready for bed. The Fact-Finding Commission is arriving tomorrow morning, you know, and I have to be up early to meet their train. Dr. and Mrs. Stirling are to be with us, and some are going to other families on the Compound, while the rest will go to the Hotel.

MRS. BROWN: Yes, I have their room all ready for them, and tomorrow promises to be a full day.

(Mr. Brown turns out the light and they leave the room.)

SCENE II

Place. The same room, after breakfast the next morning. Dr. and Mrs. Stirling, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, Bobby and Billy come in from the dining room.

MRS. BROWN: I do hope you are not too tired from your journey, for I fear they have planned a very full programme for these three days you are to be here.

MRS. STIRLING: Oh, no -- though I must say your Indian trains are very different from our Pullmans, and I never dreamed that I should be as cold in India, as I was last night on the train. I was glad we had our heavy coats with us, though when we landed in Bombay I never really believed we should need them. It was so hot there!

MR. BROWN: You ought to be here in May and June. Then we can give you a taste of hotter weather than Bombay ever knows, - a shade temperature, day after day, well over 100 degrees, occasionally as high as 118.

DR. STIRLING: Really? It is hard to believe that, in early December. What is the programme for this morning?

MR. BROWN: My wife is going to take Mrs. Stirling and three of the other ladies of your party into the city to see the High School for Hindu and Mohammedan girls, and incidently a wonderful view of the city from the top of the school building, and then on to the Mission Dispensary for women at one of the gates of the city. While they are doing this, you are to speak to our students, (you had my letter about it I think?) from eleven to eleven-thirty. It is our regular Bible period, and it is a wonderful opportunity.

DR. STIRLING: I shall be very glad to speak to them. How many students will there be?

MR. BROWN: You will have an audience of at least eight or nine hundred out of our thousand students, - young Hindus, Mohammedans, Sikhs, and Christians. And although there are two Women's colleges here, we also have fifteen girls in our college, and more applying for admission every year. The students are more receptive to Christian teaching than ever before. We had a series of very fine meetings for them led by Dr. Stanley Jones, a few weeks ago, and there was a very real response on the part of the students. With all this antagonism between the religious communities, especially Hindus and Mohammedans, and all this political unrest, the young men and women of India do not know where to turn. The old order has gone, and they are looking eagerly to Christianity to see if they can find in Christ what they are longing for. It is a wonderful opportunity, if only we can see it, and lead these seekers to the Light.

(The two men go out together talking.)

MRS. BROWN (turning to Mrs. S.): If you will get your wraps on, I will go and see if the little boys are all right with their ayah (caretaker) before I leave them. You know we have two children at the fine school for missionaries' children up in the mountains -- at Woodstock, you know. It is such a comfort to know that they are in a good climate, and getting a good education and can still be with us for part of the year. They have their three months vacation in the winter-time, and will be coming down to us in about a week now.

MRS. STIRLING: Your husband mentioned that you have two children in America in college also. How hard the separation from them must be. I could hardly bear to leave our children for six months to take this trip.

MRS. BROWN: Yes, it is hard, but as long as we get good news of them each week it is not so bad. After your husband's lecture we shall return here, and Mr. Harvey of the Y.M.C.A. is coming with his car to show you some more of the sights, and then to lunch at their home. This afternoon I believe they have arranged for Dr. Stirling to have interviews with different Hindu and Mohammedan leaders, and Tea with Sir Hakim Shah, a graduate of our College, and a Justice of the High Court of the Province. In the meantime I have arranged for a little Purdah party here, that is, a tea for ladies only, and several very interesting ladies are coming to meet you.

MRS. STIRLING: Oh, that will be splendid! I am so eager to meet some educated Indian women. I have heard so much about them.

MRS. BROWN: After tea, you will have time for a rest before going out to dinner. You are invited to the home of Prof. and Mrs. Singh. They are very fine Christian people, both educated at Cambridge University, and they are planning to have you meet a number of their friends. It is time for us to get ready to go out now.

(They go out by different doors.)

SCENE III

Place. The same living-room, arranged for afternoon tea. Mrs. Brown is in the room, putting the final touches to the tea-tables, etc. Enter Mrs. Price, a neighbor and fellow-missionary. They greet each other affectionately.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, there you are, Grace. It is so good of you to come and help me out this afternoon. I felt I just couldn't manage without you. I have asked a number of Indian ladies to meet Mrs. Stirling, and it will be such a help if you and Miss Gupta will introduce the ladies to her while we are having tea, and also, if you have a chance, do tell her something about them. You have lived here so many years and know them all so intimately.

MRS. PRICE: I am just delighted to be here. Do let me make myself useful.

MRS. BROWN: Here is dear Miss Gupta. She said she would come a little early, and she always does what she says she will do!

(Enter a sweet-faced, gray-haired Indian lady, dressed in a silk sari, in some pretty but quiet color. Mrs. Brown greets her very warmly, and kisses her.)

MRS. BROWN: How good of you to come early, after a busy day in school! I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. I am so anxious for Mrs. Stirling to get a real glimpse of educated Hindu, Mohammedan and Christian women.

MISS GUPTA: Yes, I enjoyed meeting her when you brought her to my school this morning. She seemed so intelligently interested in all she saw.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2021 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/hopeofindia00unse>

(Enter Mrs. Stirling, from her bedroom. Mrs. Brown introduces Mrs. Price, and Mrs. Stirling and Miss Gupta also exchange greetings.)

MRS. STIRLING (eagerly to Miss Gupta): I am so glad you are here before the others, for since I met you and saw your wonderful school this morning, I have thought of so many questions to ask you!

MISS GUPTA (laughing): Ask all you like, only if you are going to write a book about India, don't misquote me, as one cold-weather visitor did. She quoted something I told her of some conditions in this city forty years ago as being true today.

MRS. STIRLING: No, indeed! I don't expect to write a book - but I would like to carry a true picture of things I have seen and heard here, back to my friends in America. Except for Bombay, this is the first big city we have visited since reaching India, and so we have seen hardly anything but the villages and villagers and have talked with none but missionaries in village work. Conditions there seem so different from what you have here, and you are almost the first educated Indian woman with whom I have had a chance to talk.

MISS GUPTA: Yes, things are indeed different here. The village people are easier to influence, and more of them are entering the Christian Church. The people in the cities are far more difficult to influence and comparatively few of them have been willing to face the social ostracism and severing of all home ties that it means to become a Christian.

MRS. PRICE (who has drawn near, and been listening eagerly): Oh, but what wonderful Christians the educated and higher caste Indians do make, when they forsake all to come to Christ! Do tell Mrs. Stirling something of your parents and your early life.

MISS GUPTA: Gladly, if there is time. My father was a Bengali of good family, who came up here from Calcutta about sixty years ago, as a clerk in a Government office. He had not been here long when he became acquainted with Dr. Holman, one of the pioneer missionaries in this province. He learned about Christ from him, and within a few months he was baptized.

MRS. STIRLING: What happened then? Did it make much difference with his family?

MISS GUPTA: When he came north, he had left my mother and my eldest sister in Calcutta. His family cast him off entirely when they heard of his baptism, and they hastily married my sister, who was just a child, to someone down there to prevent her and my mother from joining him. After a short time, however, my sister's husband died, and the whole family was saddened at the thought that she would now be one of India's child-widows.

MRS. PRICE: You see, they realized that her whole life would be affected. She was a child, yet she would never be allowed to marry again, and she would be deprived of much of the joy of life.

MISS GUPTA: This led them to relent when my father wrote begging to have his wife and child join him, and they finally came up here, with the stipulation that they would only eat food prepared by a woman of their own caste. However, my father arranged for my sister to attend the first Christian school for girls that had ever been established here, and within a few months my mother and sister were also baptized, by Dr. Holman.

MRS. STIRLING: So you were born into a Christian home?

From: [illegible] To: [illegible]

Subject: [illegible]

Date: [illegible]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

MISS GUPTA: Yes. My two younger sisters and I were born here after my mother became a Christian, and when we grew up we were sent to a school in England for a year or two. One sister became a missionary doctor and the other two married Christian men. My nephew is now Principal of this College.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, there is Lady Mohammed Ali's car. (She goes out to greet her guests.)

MISS GUPTA: This is a most interesting family, the first educated Mohammedan women in this province to break the age-long custom of "purdah."

MRS. PRICE: It was very hard for them to make the break.

(Mrs. Brown enters with three ladies, a mother and two daughters, all dressed in beautiful silk saris, with many jewels.)

MRS. BROWN: Mrs. Stirling, I want you to meet Lady Mohammed Ali, and her daughters, Mrs. Nur Ahmad, and Mrs. Taj Din. Mrs. Nur Ahmad is the lady whose name you have seen frequently in the papers during recent months, in connection with political matters.

(The ladies all exchange greetings. There is a knock at the door and Mrs. Brown goes to greet another Mohammedan lady wearing a "burqu," which she throws back and proceeds to take off. She is very gorgeously dressed. She does not talk much English, is introduced as Mrs. Allah Din, and her conversation for a new moments consists mostly of nods and smiles, and then she sits at back of stage talking with one of the other ladies. Mrs. Nur Ahmad and Mrs. Stirling take chairs in the foreground.)

MRS. NUR AHMAD: So you are on a visit to India! What do you think of it?

MRS. STIRLING: Oh, it is all so vast and so complex that it is difficult to give any answer beyond that I am fascinated and thrilled beyond words with what I have seen and heard. I am greatly impressed by all the great problems that face all of you who are working for the good of your country. What a vast uneducated population there is, and what a great gulf there seems to be between them and the educated people! And then we hear so much of the differences between the religious communities.

MRS. NUR AHMAD: Yes, indeed, there are great problems, but we are trying to awaken and educate the women, and so bring about better conditions. You see, the lady who came in a little while ago (indicating the purdah lady) all of our family used to be like that, and when we made the break and gave up "purdah," you cannot imagine how hard it was for us, for we were greatly criticized by all our orthodox Mohammedan friends.

MRS. STIRLING: Do tell me how you managed to take the first step. It must have been so hard when you had never met any men outside of your own home, and never gone with your face uncovered in public.

MRS. NUR AHMAD: My father was appointed to a post in Delhi (pronounced Dull-lee) on the Viceroy's Council, so it was easier for us to go out in public in a strange place first. I well remember my feelings when I first went to an English dinner-party in Delhi, and had to sit with a man on either hand! It was harder for my mother, as she was older, and had not learned English in school as my sister and I had; but she has picked it up wonderfully, and now we go everywhere, and have all been to Europe. Altogether, I know of eleven Mohammedan ladies of this city who have come out of purdah, and there may be twenty.

(The Tea-party has been going on, with much conversation, etc. Mrs. Brown now comes up, and Mrs. Nur Ahmad moves over to talk to Miss Gupta.)

MRS. BROWN: Do you see how they all love Miss Gupta, and how Mrs. Nur Ahmad goes right over to her? The sad thing is, however, that Mrs. Nur Ahmad, in spite of all she owes to years of teaching by Christians is absolutely hard and self-satisfied when it comes to religion. I was talking with her one day about Christianity, and she said, - we have known each other for years - "My dear Helen, we shall remain far better friends if we keep off the subject of religion."

MRS. STIRLING: I see how difficult it must be.

MRS. BROWN (indicating another lady who has just entered and is being greeted by Mrs. Price): There is Lady Hakim Shah. She is very different in her attitude. She, too, has "broken purdah," and went with her husband to Europe last summer. He is an old graduate of our College, and a highly respected judge. They both have a very friendly attitude toward Christianity, and are a real influence for good in this city. Some feel that a time is coming when many of the educated people will turn to Christ as the only hope for their country and for themselves. (Mrs. Mohan Lal, the Hindu lady, enters.) Here comes Mrs. Mohan Lal, a Hindu lady. I had feared she was not coming.

(She brings Lady Hakim Shah and Mrs. Mohan Lal over to meet Mrs. Stirling, and gives the newcomers tea.)

MRS. STIRLING (to Lady Hakim Shah): I hear that you have recently been to Europe, and that you have also taken this momentous step.

LADY HAKIM SHAH: You mean my coming out of purdah? Yes, indeed it was a big step. My husband and sons have wished me to do it for years, but my dear old mother is a very orthodox Mohammedan, -- she has made the pilgrimage to Mecca -- and it was hard to go against her wishes, and also to face all the criticism. However, it was easier to make the first break away from here on the steamer and in Europe.

MRS. STIRLING: It must be hard to emerge into the world when you have never seen or spoken to any men outside of these of your own family. (Turns to Mrs. Mohan Lal, and as they talk Lady Hakim Shah turns to talk to someone else.) Are you also in purdah?

MRS. MOHAN LAL (laughing): Oh no, I am not a Mohammedan. Hindu ladies in North India, save in very strict, old-fashioned families, do not keep purdah. Besides, I have had a very free life. I went to California with my brothers when I was twelve years old, and was there until I graduated from the University of Calif.

MRS. STIRLING: Indeed! What an interesting life you must have had! How did you happen to come back to India? (Mrs. Price quietly joins them.)

MRS. MOHAN LAL: I had heard a great deal of Mr. Gandhi and was fired with a desire to help my less fortunate sisters, so I returned to India, intending to teach. However, I was young, and it is still rather unheard-of for a Hindu girl to remain unmarried and teach -- though many Christian women do so -- so my family persuaded me to consent to a marriage.

MRS. PRICE: And that is how we got to know her. Miss Nasir, one of our Bible workers, has visited Mrs. Mohan Lal's mother-in-law, a very conservative and old-fashioned Hindu lady, for years, and when Mrs. Mohan Lal came to live in her father-in-law's house after her marriage, Miss Nasir took me to see her.

MRS. MOHAN LAL: You can imagine my delight at meeting Americans again! It just took me back to California. But one thing - I suppose you will think it strange, in all those years in your land, I never learned to know the Bible, nor did I get to really know any Christian people.

MRS. BROWN: I wonder if Christian people in our great cities in America and England realize how many Indians and other orientals, coming to live in their midst for purposes of study or business, never get to know anything beyond the surface of our western life. They see many things for which we have cause to be ashamed, but they do not see the countless Christian homes that make the backbone of our country.

(They are interrupted by a general movement of the ladies to say farewell and go home. They all, save Mrs. Mohan Lal, Miss Gupta, and Mrs. Price, say goodbye to Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Stirling and gradually depart, the purdah lady carefully swathing herself in her burqu before going out of the door, Mrs. Brown first looking out and saying;)"Y

"Yes, your car is at the door, and your woman-servant is waiting. There are no men in sight, save your driver, and he is looking the other way."

(After they leave, the ladies gather together again.)

MRS. STIRLING (impulsively to Mrs. Mohan Lal): But you have got to know of Christ and His love since coming here?

MRS. MOHAN LAL: Oh, yes. I have been reading the Bible regularly with Miss Nasir and Mrs. Price here. You know, she is a graduate of the University of California (looking at her affectionately.) I feel I am a Christian and I want to confess Christ openly, but - (hesitatingly) - you know I have a little baby, and I love my husband. He is a fine man and very good to me. He did not go to a Mission School and College, so he does not know much about Christianity yet and so far is not very much interested in its teaching. He is very busy in his office, but I am hoping and praying that his heart may be softened and that I may win him to Christ. I do not feel it would be right to leave him, - so I want you all to pray that we may some day, not too far off, confess Him together.

MRS. STIRLING: Thank you so much for telling me all this.

MISS GUPTA: Those of us who live in the midst of all this seething unrest in the India of today, and see the longing for something better that is filling the hearts of India's young people, cannot help but feel that India's only hope is in Christ, and Him alone.

C U R T A I N

